

Easter Day Sermon 5 April 2026

Grafton Cathedral

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*That we might receive this joy* © Jan Richardson [janrichardson.com](http://janrichardson.com)

*The two Marys went to the tomb, and encountered the Angel of the Lord, saw the empty tomb, and then ran to tell others in fear and great joy (Mt 28:8).*

Throughout Lent I've been using the Lenten Study Book on the theme of Joy. It's full of rich biblical reflections on this theme which occurs throughout the scriptures.

Each day offers a reflection by one of the Bishops of the Australian Church. It followed the one from last year – the Hope25 Lent Study book, also written by the bishops.

It seems that even bishops can be swayed by persuasive Publishers – Broughton Publishing – because the Hope25 book sold out with over 12,000 copies. So they asked us to do one for this year on the theme of Joy. It seems next year we're doing it again – peace.

There's not a lot of joy out there right now, so Joy has been a welcome friend these past few weeks. One thing that has stood out for me is that joy is the most reliable indicator of God's presence.

In terms of our readings this morning we see joy as a theme front and centre:

The two Marys went to the tomb, and encountered the Angel of the Lord, saw the empty tomb, and then ran to tell others in fear and great joy (28:8).

Often we talk about choosing joy, but in this case, joy chose them!

Some describe joy as an emotion, but it's much more than that.

Paul lists joy as a fruit of the Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:22). St Thomas Aquinas teaches that joy, although not a virtue, is caused in us by the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love.

Joy is a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and also, in the scriptures, joy is found in union with the Crucified Lord.

So joy shows we are resurrection people, that we have encountered the Risen Christ, put on Christ and clothed ourselves in the fruit of the spirit.

Choosing Joy can be an intentional decision to cultivate happiness, peace, and purpose regardless of external circumstances. It involves focusing on gratitude, and faith to overcome daily challenges, rather than waiting for happiness which comes and goes, depending on our circumstances.

Too often, joy is missing from our lives. This can be a challenge, especially when politicians and leaders take advantage of dissatisfaction by playing the blame game, and offering hatred, fear and division as a solution to society's problems. Many leaders today aren't leading the world down a very joyful path.

We should always be grounded in scripture though. And when we look to Scripture, we see examples of early Christians thriving even amid hardship and persecution. How do we recapture that deep and stubborn joy?

Choosing joy in the midst of difficulties can go against all our instincts. We're happy when circumstances are good and sad or angry when they aren't. But as resurrection people we are to look for lasting joy found in God – God's goodness, God's love, Christ's Cross and Resurrection - rather than happiness which can be fleeting and even self centred.

Colossians 3 is our second reading and while it doesn't mention joy it outlines how we are to live in the light of the resurrection.

v.10 ... *clothe yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.*

Live as resurrection people, put away former things and clothe ourselves in the new self.

Specifically, put away hatred, division, fear of the other ... these are easy blame techniques used by populist politicians to blame certain minorities for the worlds problems – based on their values of self-interest, greed, division, and betrayal of truth – all the forces that put Jesus on the Cross in the first place.

But our scriptures today tell us to put on Christ - and live according to kingdom values - where differences are not divisive but enriching (Col 3:11) *In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!*

Putting on Christ means caring for the sick as he did, welcoming the stranger as he did, loving neighbours, fighting oppression and working for justice as he did. Offering kindness and mercy and walking humbly as he did.

Are you open to receiving God's joy in your life despite perilous circumstances? As current events challenge and disturb you, and those close to you, how do you plan to be, intentionally, in God's presence – a place from which he can fill you with joy? How do you plan to share this with others?

*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary ... left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.*

May we look not to the world to offer us joy but to God's presence. As we encounter the resurrected Christ may we be filled with joy through his Holy Spirit and live as resurrection people, clothed in Christ and living in the way of Christ.

### **Prayer**

O God, whose truest name is love and whose most intimate being is relationship, of your kindness, share with our human hearts some of that gift of your love, that, our minds and souls renewed, we would look on you, one another and ourselves with lovers' eyes of delight, and find in a life shared in love the purpose of our existence and the spring of all joy, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(The Canterbury Book of New Parish Prayers, p.128)*